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OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of
Mu-Lin Chen
Application No. 09/781,246
Filed: February 13, 2001
For: RATCHET WRENCH

DECISION ON PETITION

This is a decision on the petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) filed July 21, 2006, requesting revival of the above-identified application.

The petition is dismissed.

Any request for reconsideration of this decision must be submitted within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time (and fee) under 37 CFR 1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Renewed Petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b)."

This application became abandoned for failure to timely reply to the Nonfinal Rejection of November 9, 2001, which set a statutory period for reply of 3 months. This application became abandoned at midnight on February 9, 2002. A Notice of Abandonment was mailed October 10, 2002.

A grantable petition to revive an abandoned application under 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be accompanied by: (1) the required reply (unless previously filed), which may met by the filing of a continuing application in a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, but must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof in an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof; (2) the petition fee required by 37 CFR 1.17(m); (3) an adequate statement that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b) was unintentional; and (4) in some instances, a terminal disclaimer (and fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.20(d)). This petition lacks item (3) above.

There are three periods to be considered during the evaluation of a petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b):

(1) the delay in reply that originally resulted in the abandonment;

(2) the delay in filing an initial petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b) to revive the

application; and

(3) the delay in filing a grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b) to revive the application.

Currently, the delay has not been shown to the satisfaction of the Director to be unintentional for periods (1), (2).

As to Period (1):

The patent statute at 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) authorizes the Director to revive an "unintentionally abandoned application." The legislative history of Public Law 97-247 reveals that the purpose of 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) is to permit the Office to have more discretion than in 35 U.S.C. §§ 133 or 151 to revive abandoned applications in appropriate circumstances, but places a limit on this discretion, stating that "[u]nder this section a petition accompanied by either a fee of \$500 or a fee of \$50 **would not be granted where the abandonment** or the failure to pay the fee for issuing the patent **was intentional** as opposed to being unintentional or unavoidable." [emphasis added]. See H.R. Rep. No. 542, 97th Cong., 2d Sess. 6-7 (1982), *reprinted in* 1982 U.S.C.C.A.N. 770-71. The revival of an intentionally abandoned application is antithetical to the meaning and intent of the statute and regulation.

35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) authorizes the Commissioner to accept a petition "for the revival of an unintentionally abandoned application for a patent." As amended December 1, 1997, 37 CFR 1.137(b)(3) provides that a petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be accompanied by a statement that the delay was unintentional, but provides that "[t]he Commissioner may require additional information where there is a question whether the delay was unintentional." Where, as here there is a question whether the initial delay was unintentional, the petitioner must meet the burden of establishing that the delay was unintentional within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) and 37 CFR 1.137(b). See *In re Application of G*, 11 USPQ2d 1378, 1380 (Comm'r Pats. 1989); 37 CFR 1.137(b). Here in view of the inordinate delay (4 years) in resuming prosecution, there is a question whether the entire delay was unintentional. Petitioner should note that the issue is not whether some of the delay was unintentional by any party; rather, the issue is whether the entire delay has been shown to the satisfaction of the Director to be unintentional.

The question under 37 CFR 1.137(b) for period (1) is whether the delay on the part of the party having the right or authority to reply to avoid abandonment (or not reply) was unintentional. Accordingly, any renewed petition must clearly identify the party having the right to reply to avoid abandonment on February 10, 2002. That party, in turn must explain what effort(s) was made to further reply to the outstanding Office action and further, why no reply was filed. If no effort was made to further reply, then that party must explain why the delay in this application does not result from a deliberate course of action (or inaction). application at the time of abandonment. Statements are required from the responsible person(s) having firsthand knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the lack of a reply to the outstanding Office action. As the courts have made clear, it is pointless for the USPTO to revive a long abandoned application without an adequate showing that the delay did not result from a deliberate course

of action. See Lawman Armor v. Simon, 2005 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 10843, 74 USPQ2d 1633 (DC EMich 2005); Field Hybrids, LLC v. Toyota Motor Corp., 2005 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 1159 (D. Minn Jan. 27, 2005); Lumenyte Int'l Corp. v. Cable Lite Corp., Nos. 96-1011, 96-1077, 1996 U.S. App. LEXIS 16400, 1996 WL 383927 (Fed. Cir. July 9, 1996) (unpublished) (patents held unenforceable due to a finding of inequitable conduct in submitting an inappropriate statement that the abandonment was unintentional).

As to Period (2):

Likewise, where the applicant deliberately chooses not to seek or persist in seeking the revival of an abandoned application, or where the applicant deliberately chooses to delay seeking the revival of an abandoned application, the resulting delay in seeking revival of the abandoned application cannot be considered as "unintentional" within the meaning of 37 CFR 1.137(b). See MPEP 711.03(c) .

The language of both 35 USC 41(a)(7) and 37 CFR 1.137(b) are clear and unambiguous, and furthermore, without qualification. That is, the delay in filing the reply during prosecution, as well as in filing the petition seeking revival, must have been, without qualification, "unintentional" for the reply to now be accepted on petition. The Office requires that the entire delay be at least unintentional as a prerequisite to revival of an abandoned application to prevent abuse and injury to the public. See H.R. Rep. No. 542, 97th Cong., 2d Sess. 7 (1982), reprinted in 1982 U.S.C.C.A.N. 771 ("[i]n order to prevent abuse and injury to the public the Commissioner . . . could require applicants to act promptly after becoming aware of the abandonment"). The December 1997 change to 37 CFR 1.137 did not create any new right to overcome an intentional delay in seeking revival, or in renewing an attempt at seeking revival, of an abandoned application. See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice, 62 Fed. Reg. 53131, 53160 (October 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 63, 87 (October 21, 1997), which clearly stated clear that any protracted delay (here, over 4 years) could trigger, as here, a request for additional information. As the courts have since made clear, a protracted delay in seeking revival, as here, requires a petitioner's detailed explanation seeking to excuse the delay as opposed to USPTO acceptance of a general allegation of unintentional delay. See Lawman Armor v. Simon, 2005 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 10843, 74 USPQ2d 1633, at 1637-8 (DC EMich 2005); Field Hybrids, LLC v. Toyota Motor Corp., 2005 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 1159 (D. Minn Jan. 27, 2005) at *21-*23. Statements are required from the responsible person(s) having firsthand knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the protracted delay, after the abandonment date, in seeking revival.

Any renewed petition may be addressed as follows:

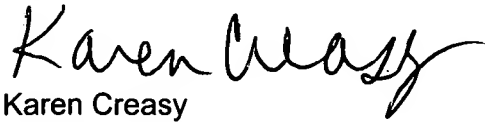
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Inquiries related to this decision may be made to the undersigned at (571) 272-3208.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Karen Creasy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Karen" and last name "Creasy" clearly distinguishable.

Karen Creasy
Petitions Examiner
Office of Petitions